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Istanbul talks break down, but truce holds

• Khawaja Asif insists Pakistan-Afghanistan negotiations 'over', in 'indefinite phase' after deadlock • Says Afghan team came 'without any programme', refused written accord • Ceasefire still in place; Islamabad warns of 'befitting' response to any violation • Pakistani side still hopeful process will resume; Kabul terms demands 'unrealistic'

By Baqir Sajjad Syed

ISLAMABAD: Talks between Pakistan and Afghanistan broke down on Friday without any agreement, as negotiators failed to bridge deep differences over how to monitor and prevent cross-border terrorism, officials and sources said, with Defence Minister Khawaja Asif insisting that the negotiations are "over" and have "entered an indefinite phase".

"Right now, as we speak, negotiations are over," Mr Asif told *Geo News*, alleging that the Afghan Taliban delegation again came to Istanbul "without any programme" and was unwilling to sign a written agreement.

A senior security source confirmed that discussions had hit an impasse. "The talks in Istanbul are deadlocked," he said.

However, it is understood that a fragile ceasefire between the two countries is still holding. The defence minister also said that the truce stands for the time being but warned that the "moment there is a ceasefire violation from their side, we will respond befittingly".

"If they have put forward any unacceptable demands, it is a means of escape, since they knew they would be unsuccessful," Mr Asif said, reiterating that Pakistan has one main demand: the cessation of attacks from the Afghan soil.

The third round of Pakistan-Afghanistan talks began on Thursday in Istanbul and was planned to continue for two days.

Pakistan's delegation, led by Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) Director General Lt Gen Asim Malik, included senior military, intelligence and Foreign Office officials.

The Afghan Taliban side was headed by General Directorate of Intelligence (GDI) chief Abdul Haq Waseq and included Suhail Shaheen, Anas Haqqani and Deputy Interior Minister Rehmatullah Najib.

Reports from Istanbul suggest that the Pakistani delegation had left the hotel for the airport after the talks broke down. There was no direct meeting between the two delegations on Friday. The sides had met face to face in the presence of Qatari and Turkish mediators the previous day.

The ISI chief and some members of the Pakistan delegation have left Istanbul, but the Pakistani side is still not ruling out resumption of the process. A source said an attempt will be made to break the deadlock. It is believed that some senior officials have stayed behind to work with the mediators.

For most of Friday, mediators engaged the Afghan delegation separately, relaying Pakistan's concerns and demands. Pakistan's Foreign Office spokesman, Tahir Hussain Andrabi, told reporters in Islamabad that the Pakistani delegation had presented its case in a "comprehensive and evidence-based manner".

He added, "The Pakistan delegation has handed over its evidence-based, justified and logical demands to the mediators with a singular aim to put an end to cross-border terrorism. They are now discussing Pakistan's demands with the Afghan delegation point by point."

The dialogue process was launched after border clashes in early October that left several soldiers and civilians dead on both sides. Turkiye and Qatar then stepped in to mediate.

The first round in Doha produced a fragile ceasefire, while the second, also

CHAMAN: Trucks carrying Afghan refugees amass near the Pak-Afghan border.—AFP

Continued on Page 11

PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari presides over a meeting of the party's Central Executive Committee.—White Star

Article 243 changes 'won't undermine civilian supremacy', says Bilawal

• PPP CEC offers 'conditional support' for constitutional courts under 27th Amendment • Fazl vows to oppose any clauses 'removed from earlier amendment' if they surface again • Asad Qaiser says PTI in contact with other parties, will take amendment to court if necessary

By Imran Ayub and Kalbe Ali

KARACHI / ISLAMABAD: The PPP on Friday set out its position on the proposed 27th Constitutional Amendment, as it declared support for the government's recommendations related to Article 243, but made its backing for the establishment of constitutional courts and judicial transfers conditional on the inclusion of its own proposals.

The announcement came a day after Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif held consultations with various ruling allies to secure support for the controversial amendment. According to cabinet ministers, the government expects to table the bill in the Senate in the coming days.

The PPP had already rejected the government's plan to reduce provincial shares in the National Finance Commission (NFC) Award, showing a renewed assertion of its "federalist principles and political independence".

Secrecy again: Editorial on Page 6

Addressing a press conference after the conclusion of the party's Central Executive Committee (CEC) meeting at Bilawal House in Karachi, PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari asserted that the amendment to Article 243, which pertains to the role and leadership of the armed forces, would not undermine civilian supremacy.

"After the victory (against India) in the May conflict, the PPP has

Continued on Page 5

KP CM's remarks about security forces spark outrage

By Manzoor Ali

PESHAWAR: 'Disparaging' remarks from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Muhammad Sohail Afridi, regarding ongoing security operations in the province, drew strong condemnation from politicians, religious leaders, and journalists on Friday.

The offending remarks came during CM Afridi's interaction with the media outside Adiala jail a day earlier, after he was once again denied an audience with PTI founder Imran Khan.

During his media talk, he alleged that the sanctity of worship places was violated when sniffer dogs were brought there, while also making disparaging remarks about security personnel.

However, he claimed that despite everything, they still supported the security forces.

Reacting to the statement, KP Governor Faisal Karim Kundi condemned Mr Afridi's words, while Awami National Party (ANP) chief Senator Aimal Wali Khan termed it an "attempt to incite religious sentiments".

"I condemn any rhetoric that seeks to undermine the honour and sacrifice of our armed forces," the governor wrote on X. He said the brave sons of soil lay down their lives to protect our province and questioning their intent in sensational terms only

Continued on Page 5

Trump expects ISF to land in Gaza 'very soon'

• Muslim diplomats parsing US resolution carefully, expect it to 'evolve' • Azerbaijan will only send peacekeepers 'if fighting stops'

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump said on Thursday that he expects a US-coordinated International Stabilisation Force (ISF) to be on the ground in Gaza "very soon".

The multinational force — likely to include troops from Muslim countries such as Egypt, Qatar, Turkiye, etc — is part of Trump's post-war governance plan for Gaza.

The plan helped lead to a fragile ceasefire between Israel and Hamas on October 10, but the humanitarian crisis in Gaza has not abated.

"It's going to be very soon. And Gaza is working out very well," Trump said at a White House function with Central Asian leaders.

"You haven't been hearing too much about problems, and I'll tell you, we've had countries that have volunteered if there's a problem with Hamas."

The force is supposed to train and support vetted Palestinian police in the Gaza Strip, with backing from Egypt and Jordan.

It also will be tasked with securing border areas and preventing weapons reaching Hamas.

On Wednesday, the United States circulated a draft UN Security Council resolution to partner nations aimed at shoring up Trump's plan, including by greenlighting the international force.

Gaza force: Editorial on Page 6

Washington's UN envoy Mike Waltz shared the draft with the 10 elected Security Council members — which includes Pakistan — and several regional partners, a spokesperson for the US mission said in a statement.

A vote has not yet been scheduled. According to diplomatic sources, several countries have indicated their willingness to participate in the force, but insist on a Security Council mandate before actually deploying troops into the Palestinian territory.

Meanwhile, senior Muslim diplomats said the issue is already sensitive, and strong pro-Palestinian sentiment in their countries makes it even more delicate.

They noted that support for the US draft resolution would depend on a clear UN mandate, a non-combat role, and coordination with Palestinian authorities.

"It is a draft that will be negotiated and evolve," a senior diplomat from a Muslim bloc country told *Dawn*. "The draft was already circulated — is being considered and discussed by the Council members at this stage."

Azeri troops

Meanwhile, *Reuters* reported that Azerbaijan does not plan to send peacekeepers to Gaza unless there is a complete halt to fighting there between Israel and Hamas.

"We do not want to put our troops in danger. This can only happen if military action is completely stopped," the Azerbaijani foreign ministry source said.

The source noted that any such decision would have to be approved by parliament. The head of the parliamentary security committee told *Reuters* that it had not yet received any draft bill on the matter.—Agencies / Anwar Iqbal

'Amendment talk' creates ripples in judicial corridors

• 'Preparations underway' to house proposed constitutional court on Shariat Court premises • Change of building won't affect court's powers, observes CB judge • Lawyer challenges proposed amendment

By Nasir Iqbal and Malik Asad

ISLAMABAD: Though no draft of the 27th Amendment has been made public yet, its impact can already be seen in the judicial corridors of the capital.

On Friday, the proposed amendment was assailed before the Supreme Court, while a flurry of 'administrative activity' suggested that groundwork was already being laid for the Federal Constitutional Court (FCC) — one of the proposals said to be part of the latest legislative package.

It was these moves that ostensibly prompted a Supreme Court judge to remark that a "change of building" would not reduce their authority.

Administrative activities observed at the Islamabad High Court (IHC) hinted that the proposed FCC may be housed at the Federal Shariat Court (FSC) premises, with ongoing discussions suggested that the latter could be moved to the third floor of the IHC building.

At present, the FSC is functioning with only three judges, including the chief justice, against a sanctioned strength of eight.

Sources said all the

Continued on Page 5

Pakistan rejects claims of fresh nuclear tests

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Friday dismissed Indian allegations of conducting clandestine nuclear tests after May 1998, calling them "baseless and malicious".

Responding to a *Dawn* query, Foreign Office (FO) spokesperson Tahir Andrabi said Pakistan had not carried out any nuclear tests after May 1998.

"For the record, Pakistan's last nuclear tests were conducted in May 1998. Our position on nuclear testing is well established and consistent," he added.

Pakistan has maintained a self-imposed moratorium on nuclear testing since its last series of tests conducted in response to India's nuclear explosions. However, it has not signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), retaining the flexibility to resume testing if its security environment, particularly in relation to India, deteriorates.

"Pakistan has been supporting United Nations General Assembly resolutions calling for a comprehensive ban on nuclear testing," the FO spokesperson noted.

"In contrast, India's abstentions on these resolutions reflect its ambiguous and questionable intentions on future nuclear testing."

The statement came after India cited a remark by US President Donald Trump, who in a recent interview with *CBS News* programme '60 Minutes', claimed that Pakistan was among the nations testing nuclear weapons, a statement Islamabad had chosen not to respond to in order to avoid offending Washington.

However, the FO broke its silence after India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) referenced Mr Trump's comment at a media briefing on Friday.

He emphasised that "Pakistan's nuclear programme operates under a robust command and

Continued on Page 11

National Assembly, Senate may remain without opposition leaders, for now

• Speaker tells PTI delegation issue is under consideration by court • Law minister tells upper house govt has 'no role in the process' • Senator Swati says House incomplete without leader of the opposition

By Amir Wasim and Iftikhar A. Khan

ISLAMABAD: The appointment of opposition leaders in both houses of parliament remains stalled, as legal challenges have rendered both matters "sub judice".

National Assembly Speaker Ayaz Sadiq informed a visiting PTI delegation on Friday that the matter of nominating the opposition leader in the lower house was "sub judice" and "under consideration" by a court.

The petitions filed by former National Assembly and Senate opposition leaders, PTI's Omar Ayub Khan and Shibli Faraz, challenging their disqualification following their conviction in May 9 cases, remain pending before the Peshawar High Court.

After Mr Ayub's conviction, the PTI nominated Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party chief Mahmood Khan Achakzai as the opposition leader in the NA. Similarly, Majlis Wahdat-i-Muslimeen's Allama Raja Nasir Abbas was nominated for the Senate slot, left vacant by Mr Faraz.

The PTI parliamentary delegation that met Mr Sadiq at the Parliament House was led by party chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan and included former NA speaker Asad Qaiser along with other party members.

A PTI delegation including party chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan and Asad Qaiser meets NA Speaker Ayaz Sadiq.—White Star

An official handout issued by the NA Secretariat also said that during the meeting, detailed discussions were held regarding the appointment of the leader of the opposition in the house and the speaker informed the delegation that the matter was currently sub judice.

The speaker emphasised that parliament was the most important and credible institution of democracy, and all political parties should play a constructive role in strengthening it.

He affirmed his readiness to serve as a bridge between the government and the opposition for the promotion of national reconciliation, parliamentary traditions, and the consolidation of the democratic process.

'Govt has no role'

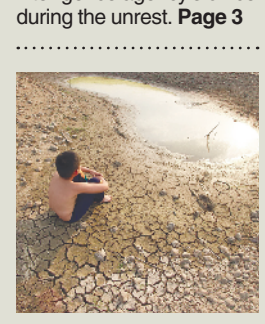
Amidst protests over the delay in appointing the opposition leader in the Senate, Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar told the upper house on Friday that the government had no

Continued on Page 5

ON OTHER PAGES

SIC chief Hamid Raza sent to jail

Faisalabad District and Sessions Judge Waseem Mubarik, acting as anti-terrorism court judge, on Friday sent Sunni Ittehad Council chief Sahibzada Hamid Raza to Central Jail Faisalabad to serve a 10-year sentence in a case related to the May 9 riots. The case, registered by Civil Lines Police, accused SIC chief and others of attacking an intelligence agency's office during the unrest. **Page 3**



Lenders warn of rising climate risks

International financial institutions have expressed concern over Pakistan's escalating climate vulnerability and environmental erosion, warning that unchecked population growth and dwindling natural resources could deepen the country's fragility. These insights emerged during the closing plenary of the 28th Sustainable Development Conference held on Friday. **Page 9**

Plus...

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